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Bison Hunters of the Western Prairies: Archaeological Investigations at the Dixon Site (13Wd8), Woodbury County, Iowa

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Bison Hunters of the Western Prairies: Archaeological Investigations at the Dixon Site (13WD8), Woodbury County, Iowa, edited by Richard L. Fishel. Report No. 21. Iowa City: Office of the State Archaeologist, 1999. xiv, 216 pp. Figures, tables, references, appendixes.

Reviewer Michael J. O'Brien is professor of anthropology at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is the author of *The Prehistory of Missouri* (1997).

The monograph series launched in 1970 by the Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA) in Iowa City—of which the report reviewed here is the twenty-first—is a welcome effort to bring to light important results of archeological fieldwork and analysis that would otherwise be difficult to find. *Bison Hunters of the Western Prairies* summarizes analysis of materials from the Dixon site, an extensive prehistoric village located on the Little Sioux River in northwestern Iowa. The findings mirror those of earlier studies: Dixon was a locale used by various prehistoric groups over a long period of time, from perhaps as early as 900 C.E. to as late as 1500 C.E. This date range, together with the occurrence of particular pottery designs and tool forms, identifies Dixon as Oneota—an archeological unit comprising a large number of sites in the upper Midwest that date after ca. 1300 C.E. The ubiquity of bison bone in all excavated portions of the site led to the title of the monograph.

The report contains nine chapters and five appendixes. Fishel provides an introduction to the investigations in chapter 1 and a discussion of site structure and dating in chapter 3. Those chapters are wrapped around Julieann Van Nest's brief but excellent discussion in chapter 2 of the area's geomorphological context. Other chapters provide information on stone-tool production and raw-material selection; pottery production and use; animal and plant use; and human skeletal remains. The chapters are well-written summaries of analysis, and appropriate data are organized into tables and appendixes. Chapter 9 is a succinct overview of Oneota in northwestern Iowa, which helps place the Dixon site in a wider historical context. I recommend that chapter as a primer for readers who want a brief history of Oneota archeology without having to spend years wading through a vast and confusing literature.

Bison Hunters is the kind of monograph that Americanist archeology needs more of. Archeologists have a duty to report their findings and in a manner that makes the information accessible to a wide audience, not only to those with an extensive background in archeology. Fishel and his colleagues have done exactly that. Rarely will one find an archeological monograph that reads as well as this one.

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